**WALK IN FEAR OF OUR GOD**

Nehemiah 5:1-19

Key Verse 9

So I continued, “What you are doing is not right. Shouldn’t you walk in the fear of our God to avoid the reproach of our Gentile enemies?”

**Introduction**



 Leadership is not about a title or a designation. It's about impact, influence and inspiration. Impact involves getting results, influence is about spreading the passion you have for your work, and you have to inspire teammates and customers. (from Robin S. Sharma) Again A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way. At today’s passage, Nehemiah showed his leadership as God’s servant. His leadership material must have come from our Lord Jesus Christ who is the True Shepherd who set a good example for us to follow. May the Lord help us to grow in Jesus’ image to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation in our generation. Amen.

1. Read verses 1-8. What made the men and their wives outcry against their fellow Jews? (1-5) What did Nehemiah do about this? (6-8)

1-1, Read verses 1-8.

 Now the men and their wives raised a great outcry against their fellow Jews. **2** Some were saying, “We and our sons and daughters are numerous; in order for us to eat and stay alive, we must get grain.” **3** Others were saying, “We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards and our homes to get grain during the famine.” **4** Still others were saying, “We have had to borrow money to pay the king’s tax on our fields and vineyards. **5** Although we are of the same flesh and blood as our fellow Jews and though our children are as good as theirs, yet we have to subject our sons and daughters to slavery. Some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but we are powerless, because our fields and our vineyards belong to others.” **6** When I heard their outcry and these charges, I was very angry. **7** I pondered them in my mind and then accused the nobles and officials. I told them, “You are charging your own people interest!” So I called together a large meeting to deal with them **8** and said: “As far as possible, we have bought back our fellow Jews who were sold to the Gentiles. Now you are selling your own people, only for them to be sold back to us!” They kept quiet, because they could find nothing to say.

1-2, What made the men and their wives outcry against their fellow Jews? (1-5)

 ***Now the men and their wives raised a great outcry against their fellow Jews. 2 Some were saying, “We and our sons and daughters are numerous; in order for us to eat and stay alive, we must get grain.” 3 Others were saying, “We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards and our homes to get grain during the famine.” 4 Still others were saying, “We have had to borrow money to pay the king’s tax on our fields and vineyards. 5 Although we are of the same flesh and blood as our fellow Jews and though our children are as good as theirs, yet we have to subject our sons and daughters to slavery. Some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but we are powerless, because our fields and our vineyards belong to others.”***

* There was a great outcry of the men and their wives against their fellow Jews. It was a problem between the workers and the officials.
* Verses 2-5 describes the workers’ sufferings and distresses. Some of them had no food to eat. Others were mortgaging their fields, their vineyards and their homes to get grain during the famine.
* Still others had borrowed money to pay the king’s tax on their properties and interest. Since they had no money they sold their children to be slaves. Their fields and their vineyards were taken away by their wealthy moneylenders.
* And even their children were taken away as collateral. Now famine hit the land and they had no food and no money to buy grain. So in despair and anger, they raised a great outcry against their officials.
* According to God’s law, it is alright for God’s people to loan money to one another. But they should not act like pawn shop owners who charge high interest when lending money to fellow Jews.
* Nehemiah tried to finish the wall. But how could they rebuild the wall when they had no food to feed their families? How could they keep on building the wall when their children were slaves in other people’s houses?

1-3, What did Nehemiah do about this? (6-8)

 ***6 When I heard their outcry and these charges, I was very angry. 7 I pondered them in my mind and then accused the nobles and officials. I told them, “You are charging your own people interest!” So I called together a large meeting to deal with them 8 and said: “As far as possible, we have bought back our fellow Jews who were sold to the Gentiles. Now you are selling your own people, only for them to be sold back to us!” They kept quiet, because they could find nothing to say.***

* Hearing their outcry, Nehemiah was very angry. He was angry not because the work was delayed but because he realized that the rich nobles and officials had no compassion on the poor brethren but made a profit by taking advantage of them against God’s command.
* Nehemiah didn’t go to them right away in the heat of the moment. Many people including myself make a mistake as they deal with the problem while angry.
* But he pondered the problems in his mind and then accused the nobles and officials. He openly confronted the wealthy leaders whose selfishness created the strife. He rebuked them of charging fellow Jews interest.
* He then called a large meeting and stated the problem of the rich nobles and officials very clearly. Then they became silent because their conscience was stricken.
1. Read verses 9-13. How did Nehemiah confront them? (9, Deut. 23:19-20) How did he set an example in lending money and grain? (10) Why did he ask them to take actions at once? (11-13)

2-1, Read verses 9-13.

So I continued, “What you are doing is not right. Shouldn’t you walk in the fear of our God to avoid the reproach of our Gentile enemies? **10** I and my brothers and my men are also lending the people money and grain. But let us stop charging interest! **11** Give back to them immediately their fields, vineyards, olive groves and houses, and also the interest you are charging them—one percent of the money, grain, new wine and olive oil.” **12** “We will give it back,” they said. “And we will not demand anything more from them. We will do as you say.” Then I summoned the priests and made the nobles and officials take an oath to do what they had promised. **13** I also shook out the folds of my robe and said, “In this way may God shake out of their house and possessions anyone who does not keep this promise. So may such a person be shaken out and emptied!” At this the whole assembly said, “Amen,” and praised the Lord. And the people did as they had promised.

2-2, How did Nehemiah confront them? (9, Deut. 23:19-20)

 ***So I continued, “What you are doing is not right. Shouldn’t you walk in the fear of our God to avoid the reproach of our Gentile enemies?***

***“Do not charge a fellow Israelite interest, whether on money or food or anything else that may earn interest. You may charge a foreigner interest, but not a fellow Israelite, so that the Lord your God may bless you in everything you put your hand to in the land you are entering to possess.”*** (Deuteronomy 23:19-20)

* Nehemiah confronted by saying, “What you are doing is not right. Shouldn’t you walk in the fear of our God to avoid the reproach of our Gentile enemies?” They were leaders of the Jews.
* Why did Nehemiah come to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall? Initially the wall of Jerusalem was broken and the people of God lived in shame, because they didn’t keep God’s command but acted wickedly against God.
* So they lived in disgrace, instead of revealing God’s glory as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. They should have lived as God’s people by loving and serving God and caring for one another in God’s love.
* The Jews should have shown to the gentiles and the whole world that God’s people in Jerusalem were at one with God and at one among themselves so that they could glorify God.
* But they fell in the sin of violating God’s law and were self-seeking at the cost of their brothers’ suffering. Why do we rebuild the wall of his church here? It is because we live as God’s people who love God together and love one another.
* How can we rebuild the wall of love and community spirit among us? First of all we have to restore the fear of God and live before him.
* We must rebuild the wall of observing God’s word in our hearts. We must also stop self-seeking and rebuild the wall of love and care for his people, by cancelling the debts of their sins and sharing what we have with them.
* It was done exactly in the early Christian church in Jerusalem. They sincerely loved God together. They loved and cared for one another in the love of Jesus. So unbelievers were amazed at this beautiful community and joined them daily.

2-3, How did he set an example in lending money and grain? (10)

 ***10 I and my brothers and my men are also lending the people money and grain. But let us stop charging interest!***

* Nehemiah himself was lending money or grain to the poor. But he never charged interest or seized others property as deposit.
* In his compassion he was freely lending whatever he had to them without interest. So he ordered the rich to stop the practice of usury and to give back their security deposits—the fields, vineyards, olive groves and houses.

2-4, Why did he ask them to take actions at once? (11-13)

 ***Give back to them immediately their fields, vineyards, olive groves and houses, and also the interest you are charging them—one percent of the money, grain, new wine and olive oil.” 12 “We will give it back,” they said. “And we will not demand anything more from them. We will do as you say.” Then I summoned the priests and made the nobles and officials take an oath to do what they had promised. 13 I also shook out the folds of my robe and said, “In this way may God shake out of their house and possessions anyone who does not keep this promise. So may such a person be shaken out and emptied!” At this the whole assembly said, “Amen,” and praised the Lord. And the people did as they had promised.***

* Surprisingly they said, “We will give it back. And we will not demand anything more from them. We will do as you say.”
* They knew that what they were doing was wrong and promised to do what Nehemiah asked them to do. Nehemiah must be greatly encouraged by their change of heart and their promise.
* But he didn’t stop there. He asked them to take an oath to do what they had promised. Without taking an oath, they could change their mind the next day knowing the fact that they had to give back huge money, properties and slaves.
* Amazingly again, they all took an oath saying, “Amen” and did as they had promised before God. This story is so beautiful, because they repented of their wrongdoings before God and made full restitution.
* In this way, they not only repaired the physical wall of Jerusalem, but also rebuild the wall of love and community spirit in their hearts.

3. Read verses 14-19. How did Nehemiah serve the people when he was appointed as governor (14-18)? What can we learn from his leadership? How did he personally pray to God (19)?

3-1, Read verses 14-19.

Moreover, from the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, until his thirty-second year—twelve years—neither I nor my brothers ate the food allotted to the governor. **15** But the earlier governors—those preceding me—placed a heavy burden on the people and took forty shekels[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=nehemiah+5&version=NIV#fen-NIV-12398a)] of silver from them in addition to food and wine. Their assistants also lorded it over the people. But out of reverence for God I did not act like that. **16** Instead, I devoted myself to the work on this wall. All my men were assembled there for the work; we[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=nehemiah+5&version=NIV#fen-NIV-12399b)] did not acquire any land. **17** Furthermore, a hundred and fifty Jews and officials ate at my table, as well as those who came to us from the surrounding nations. **18** Each day one ox, six choice sheep and some poultry were prepared for me, and every ten days an abundant supply of wine of all kinds. In spite of all this, I never demanded the food allotted to the governor, because the demands were heavy on these people. **19** Remember me with favor, my God, for all I have done for these people.

3-2, How did Nehemiah serve the people when he was appointed as governor (14-18)?

 ***Moreover, from the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, until his thirty-second year—twelve years—neither I nor my brothers ate the food allotted to the governor. 15 But the earlier governors—those preceding me—placed a heavy burden on the people and took forty shekels of silver from them in addition to food and wine. Their assistants also lorded it over the people. But out of reverence for God I did not act like that. 16 Instead, I devoted myself to the work on this wall. All my men were assembled there for the work; we did not acquire any land. 17 Furthermore, a hundred and fifty Jews and officials ate at my table, as well as those who came to us from the surrounding nations. 18 Each day one ox, six choice sheep and some poultry were prepared for me, and every ten days an abundant supply of wine of all kinds. In spite of all this, I never demanded the food allotted to the governor, because the demands were heavy on these people.***

* Nehemiah himself also showed such a beautiful example. When he was a governor, he loved God and cared for his people.
* He didn’t eat the food allotted to the governor, knowing that if he did so, his poor people would suffer to provide it.
* He didn’t collect the additional forty-shekel tax that previous governors levied. Furthermore, a hundred and fifty Jews and officials ate at his table, as well as those who came from the surrounding nations. He fed them all at his own expense.

3-3, What can we learn from his leadership?

* There is a saying, “Managers do things right. Leaders do the right things.” Spiritual leadership is about leading by example.
* Spiritual leaders are to walk the talk. Jesus led his disciples by showing examples himself. He washed his disciples’ feet and asked them to wash one another’s feet.
* He took care of his flock and asked his disciples to take care of God’s flock. He forgave sinners and even those who crucified him and asked his followers to forgive others.
* May we come together to love God and to care for others in Jesus’ love. May we walk the talk and show examples to others so that Jesus can use our church as the light of the world.

3-4, How did he personally pray to God (19)?

***19 Remember me with favor, my God, for all I have done for these people.***

* Nehemiah sought only God’s favour, not people’s. He sought to do God’s will and in love and compassion served God’s people.
* He lived before God and served others sacrificially. Nehemiah led his people by setting a good example himself.

**Conclusion**

 As we had studied at our 2018 international summer Bible conference based on Matthew 5:14-16, Jesus said to his followers, “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden…Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” May the Lord help each of us to develop the holy fear of God and love dearly one another so that we may be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation for God’s eternal glory. Amen!

**One word: Shouldn’t we fear God?**